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CHARITY TO THE POOR AND AFFLICTED, THE DUTY
AND INTEREST OF THE PROSPEROUS:

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE DESIRE OF

*THE SOCIETY FOR RELIEF OF THE
DESTITUTE SICK,*

On Sabbath, Jan. 1. 1797.

BY ANDREW LOTHIAN,
MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION,
PORTSBURGH.

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CHARITY TO THE POOR AND AFFLICTED, THE DUTY
AND INTEREST OF THE PROSPEROUS :

A

S E R M O N.

JOB xxix. 11.—16.

When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me ; because I delivered the poor that cried, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me ; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor ; and the cause which I knew not I searched out.

IN early life and in old age, Job was prosperous. Between these periods, he endured poverty and affliction for a season. It was natural, in such a season, to look back with a wishful eye on his time of prosperity.

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Less happy and less useful than in former days, he utters this passionate exclamation, *O that I were as in months past!* It is the wish, not of a selfish, but of a generous soul. Job desired the return of departed health, opulence and honour, not merely for his own comfort, but that he might be able, *as in months past*, to deliver *the poor that cried*, and to cause *the widow's heart to sing for joy*. To such works of charity and labours of love this good man had devoted himself, *when the candle of God shined upon his head*. When darkness covered him, he wished the return of light, that, as in former and better days, he might be *eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor, the deliverer of him who was ready to perish, and had none to help him*.

The benevolent disposition and the charitable conduct of this venerable patriarch, command our esteem and challenge our imitation. We stay not to enquire, whether the text exhibits him as a just and merciful magistrate, or only as a charitable and upright man. Suffice it to observe, that such labours of love as those performed by this ornament of ancient times, and to his great and lasting honour recorded in the text, are, both by the law of nature and revelation, enjoined on all who rule and all who are under authority, and, by the sanction of everlasting rewards and punishments, enforced, in due proportion to ability, on all men who are not themselves poor and afflicted.

Our text delineates the situation of those for whom the Society instituted for relief of destitute sick, solicit

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the public charity. It represents it, not as a debt of humanity only, but as a duty of righteousness, not merely as our duty, but also as our interest, to relieve our poor, afflicted and helpless brethren. I purpose, therefore, in this discourse, to shew,---that the persons for whom we solicit charity are extremely needy;---that you are under strong obligations to exert yourselves for their relief;---and that, in doing good to your needy brethren, you will not only discharge your duty, but most essentially promote your own interest.

I. The persons for whom we solicit charity are extremely needy. They are not all equally *desitute, afflicted and tormented*. The kinds and the degrees of distress are various; but every case which we bring before you is pressing, and makes a powerful appeal to your compassion. The afflicted mentioned in the text, the helpless for whom we ask and expect your aid, may be arranged in the following order. They are *poor that cry*;---*widows and fatherless*;---*blind and lame*;---*ready to perish*;---*such as have none to help them*.

In the *first* place, Among the needy for whom we solicit charity, are *the poor that cry*. Among the many and great evils which afflict humanity, poverty is none of the least. Its reign is wide in the world, its pressure is great in every country and in every city. The contempt of the proud, the wanton injuries of the cruel, follow in its train, and add affliction to the afflicted. By the poor mentioned in the text as objects of charity,

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are not meant those who by the sweat of their brow can procure for themselves, though not the luxuries, yet the conveniencies of life. Persons of this description form the largest and perhaps the happiest portion of mankind. In toiling for their bread, they obey the law of nature and of nature's God. Their garb, dwelling and fare may be homely; but, while they labour, in reverential obedience to the will of Heaven, and with contented resignation to the arrangements of Providence, their *sleep is sweet*, and their situation more the object of envy than of pity. Yet poor there are in our land, proper objects of compassion; many poor within our gates, who cannot live without the aid of their brethren. These are such as Job was wont to deliver in ancient times. In the text they are denominated *poor that cry*. Where can we dwell, whither can we go, without hearing the bitter and piercing *cry* of many who are *in hunger, and in thirst, and in want of all things*? Whence this extreme distress? How ought it to be treated? Shall we trace it to something reprehensible, and *shut up our bowels of compassion*? Often, it must be acknowledged, this miserable poverty is the offspring of sloth, imprudence or vice. *The poverty of the sluggard cometh as one that travelleth, and his want as an armed man**; the simple becomes surety for a stranger, and smarts for his simplicity; riotous living consumes the portion of the prodigal, and rash adventures ruin the ambitious. Now, if we esteem the worthy

* Prov. vi. 11.

thy and love the amiable, we cannot, in such men, find objects who deserve our esteem and love. But benevolence embraces mankind; it resembles that exalted mercy which is over all the works of God; it is more inclined to *deliver the poor that cry*, than, by tracing poverty to sloth, imprudence, or vice, to make the hardness of a selfish heart pass for an exercise of discretion. When *strength is hunger-bitten, and destruction ready by the side of man**, it is not time to discuss demerit, but time to relieve distress. Be it so, then, that want is the fruit of folly, admonition is proper, and may be useful; yet, surely, even the prodigal in distress should experience the sympathy of his wiser brethren.

But it is not the slothful, imprudent and vicious only who come to want, and cry under the pains of poverty. To that wise, righteous and kind Providence which presides over all, it seems good that many active, wise and upright men, many *children of the kingdom*, shall eat crumbs, and wear rags, and sit like Lazarus in the gate; while men, destitute of worth as Dives, like him, reside in splendid mansions, are clothed in purple, and fare sumptuously every day. *We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and have no certain dwelling-place*†. Was it thus with apostles in their day, with men who now sit enthroned on high, judging the tribes of the redeemed? and shall not many among these tribes, in their pilgrimage through this valley of tears, be numbered with *the poor that cry*? Yes; often the best of men are *poor*
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* Job xviii. 12.

† 1 Cor. iv. 11.

and needy, and seek bread and water, and there is none, and their tongues fail for hunger and thirst. If benevolence should open her hand to the worst when their need is great, surely beneficent love ought to abound in all the *riches of liberality*, when even *the excellent ones of the earth cry* under the pains of poverty.

In the *second place*, Among those who appeal to your sympathy are poor widows and fatherless children. The sorrows of widowhood and fearful anxiety about helpless offspring, combined with the pressure of poverty, form a very complicated scene of distress. The tender endearments of conjugal life double the joys of prosperity, and strip adversity of more than half its sorrows. *Two are better than one*: if the one fall, the other is ready to raise up the fallen; but when the husband and father has descended into the grave, who or what shall lift up the forlorn widow and her helpless offspring in their poverty and affliction? For a family already poor and needy, to be bereaved of the only support and consolation it had on earth, how heavy the stroke! Figure to yourselves the sad scene; think how many such you have beheld; it is common among men, familiar to that Society who dispense the gifts of benevolence to the destitute; this night it bespeaks your sympathy. The husband, the father, is no more. There is a place *where the weary are at rest*, and in that place his bones repose. He will never return to toil for his needy family, nor to dispel their sadness by the wonted smiles of his love. What shall relieve, who shall comfort the
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poor mourners? Among the rich and gay, fulness of bread, and many friends, and attention to the forms of artificial mourning, withdraw the thoughts from the grave of a departed friend, and steal away the heart from nature's sorrows. But if we consider the case of the poor widow, surrounded with her helpless children, all things appear combined to prolong her grief and oppress her heart. Her little ones cry for bread, and there is none; every cry reminds her that the friend of her bosom, the hope of her family, is no more: every face among the children, presents to view the image of the father, and bids the widowed mother think how sadly his much-loved countenance is changed! Night descends upon the sky; but he who was wont to toil for his family, returns not from the toils of the day: The eyes of the morning open, and men arise from sleep; but his eyes are covered with the darkness of a long night, he sleeps the sleep of death, and can no more arise or go forth to labour with the living. The sabbath comes, the people assemble, the praises of the highest Lord are sung; but his seat is empty, and his voice is not heard in the house of God. The year ends, but he says not with a sigh, it hath passed away *as a tale that is told*; it begins, but he hails not its commencement with the accustomed joys of the season. The children miss the knees they were wont to climb with pleasure. The fond hope of a father is not heard, saying of a favourite child, *this shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands* *. The few friends of the poor and forlorn

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* Gen. v. 29.

meet and talk ; but the tongue of the nearest and kindest friend, the friend whose voice was sweetest to the ear, is silent in the grave. To keep the fountain of sorrow full, memory is ever busy in recording pleasures which are passed away never to return ; and, perhaps, to complete the distress, and almost overwhelm the heart of the poor widow, a child is born to the dead, and born the heir of hunger, thirst, nakedness, ignorance, and wanton injury. If the rocks had eyes, and could shed tears, they would weep while they beheld the widow mourning in the midst of her starving offspring. While the eyes of such needy ones fail with tears, and their hearts faint with hunger, while *the children and the sucklings pour their souls into the bosom of a widowed mother, and swoon away, saying, where are the corn and the wine,* ought not our bowels to be troubled for them * ? Should not our tongues speak words of comfort ? should not our hands be stretched forth *to deliver the fatherless,* and if possible to *cause the widow's heart to sing for joy* ? Surely we would do well to remember, that *pure religion and undefiled before God our Father, is to visit and to relieve the fatherless and the widows in their affliction* †.

In the third place, There are among those for whom we ask charity, the poor *blind* and the poor *lame*. The text informs us, that Job was *eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*. To view the words *blind* and *lame* as expressive of defects both in body and mind, will tend to unfold the plan of that Society who dispense the public charity

* See Lam. ii. 11, 12.

† James, i. 27.

charity to the destitute, and will be agreeable to the style of the sacred Scriptures.

Some have never seen the light, and some have been lame from the womb. Others have beheld the lights of heaven, the landscapes of the earth, and the faces of men, but have by disease, a flash of lightning, or some unexpected and inevitable accident, been numbered with the blind for the residue of their years. Some who were once strong, agile and active, are now lame. Deprived by disease of its native vigour, broken or dislocated by the slipping of a foot, the fall of a stone, or the stroke of an enemy, some important member of the body refuses to perform its office, and renders man unfit for the business of life.

Want of sight and lameness are in themselves sore afflictions. How many, how exquisite, the pleasures of which they deprive men! How severe the pain which commonly begins and attends them! Surely the *light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun*; but this pleasure cannot be experienced by the blind. Is it not delightful also to move about pursuing business, observing the works of God, and mingling with society at pleasure? But the lame, with sight perhaps to behold surrounding objects, and a mind which loves activity, is a prison to himself, and looks on men and the affairs of the world like a prisoner from his window. Thus, lameness and want of sight cut off men from the cheerful ways of their brethren, and unfit them for earning their bread by labour, or seeking it

in the world. Consider the case of the poor blind and lame, the pleasures of which they are deprived, the pains they are doomed to suffer, their extreme want, and their incapacity for labour. Is not the sum of their afflictions great? Are not such men proper objects of charity? Are not we who behold the light, we whose members are entire, debtors to these our poor, joyless, and afflicted brethren?

But the words *blind* and *lame* are expressive also of spiritual defects. In this view, he who knows not the path of life is blind. *The god of this world hath blinded the mind of him who believes not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine into it.* The God of heaven may save such blinded mortals from stumbling into the pit of perdition; but he will do this only by opening the eyes of their understandings, and letting in the light of truth upon their minds. Where blindness pervades the intellectual faculties, the active powers are lame. *Through the ignorance which is in them, men are alienated from the life of God,* quite indisposed for walking in the high way of holiness. *The holy One and the Just* will save such polluted and perverse creatures from the ruin to which their courses tend, only by *turning their feet unto his testimonies*, and adorning their souls with his image. Surely then the case is deplorable, where the eyes of the body are blind, and those of the understanding darkened; where the body is lame, and the heart depraved. The case is common; it calls aloud for sympathy. Well, it is the design and the endeavour of

of that Society at whose desire I address you, to be, in the religious as well as in the common meaning of the expression, *eyes to the blind and feet to the lame*, to make them *see out of obscurity the things which belong to their peace*, and *run with enlarged hearts in that path which terminates in fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*. As the end is good, so the plan is wise :---yes ; for to whom will the blind and lame, the ignorant and unholy, listen with such an attentive and obedient ear, as to him who opens the hand of charity to relieve great need, while he opens the lips of love to impart useful instruction ? In this, as in other cases, *a man's gift makes room for him*. Is the hand able to relieve, and the soul tuned to sympathy ? Has the mind discerned the importance of religion, and the heart tasted its consolations ? Happy the man who is in such a situation, and happy the needy who has such a neighbour ; for surely he will labour to relieve distress, and rejoice to diffuse felicity. Obedient to the calls of religion as well as of humanity, he will endeavour, not merely by the gift of charity to be dispensed by others, but also, if possible, by personal visits, to be *eyes to the blind and feet to the lame*. To the wise, the charitable, and the good, a word is enough ; and I shall rejoice to find many such inrolling their names with those who visit *the houses of mourning*, to distribute the public charity, and to *speak a word in season to the weary*.

In the *fourth* place, Among the extremely needy who claim your aid, are some *ready to perish*. In the lan-

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guage of the Bible, *to perish* signifies to die, or to be undone for ever. Thus the tribes of Israel exclaimed, *Behold we die, we perish, we all perish; shall we be consumed with dying**? Faithful labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, are said to be *a sweet savour of Christ, in those who are saved, and in those who perish*†. Of those, in whose behalf I am come to plead with their brethren, some are, by extreme poverty and sore affliction, brought to the very gates of the grave. Every heart, which is not dead to sympathetic feeling, must be deeply affected at the view of their mournful situation. Look on the tattered garments; see the body, where it requires a covering in summer's warmth, exposed to the winter's cold: behold the habitation of him who is *ready to perish*! how confined and dark, and wet and cold! his couch is hard, and almost without covering. The wind and the rain, the hoar-frost and the snow of December, are not excluded. In the house, there is no bread; the pocket is empty; credit is refused in the city and in the country. Strength has failed; the loins shake with feebleness; the heart aches with pain; the eye is become hollow like the open grave, and languid like the stillness of death. The countenance has assumed the paleness of clay. Desires, strong before, are now faint and languishing. All things announce, that the body is about to be deserted by the grieved spirit, and delivered over to the wasting worms of corruption. To aggravate exceedingly this great distress, to command
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* See Num. xvii. 12, 13.

† 2 Cor. ii. 15.

the compassion of every heart which is not an entire stranger to the love of God and man, it ought to be remembered, that often, while poverty and pain are ready to destroy the flesh, ignorance and vice threaten to plunge the spirit into bottomless perdition. Dying of want and disease, yet *plowing iniquity and sowing wickedness*, our fellow-men are *ready to perish by the blast of God, and by the breath of his nostrils to be consumed for ever* *. What a sad and affecting scene claims your attention ! Here are your fellow-travellers on the journey of life, not only arrested by poverty and affliction, but ready to die of disease, and for want of all means necessary to prolong life, or to mitigate severe suffering. Some of these already *stumble upon the dark mountains ; their steps take hold on hell, and hell is open beneath, destruction uncovered to receive them*. Sons of the dust ! heirs of immortality ! Shall beings who, like yourselves, must die and yet endure for ever, *be destroyed from morning to evening ? Shall they die, even without wisdom, and perish for ever without any regarding it ? Why should the excellency which is in them go away* †, unheeded by the children of men ?

In the *last* place, Those for whom we ask charity are such *poor, widows, fatherless, blind, lame and perishing ones, as have none to help them*. For the relief of such was formed that Society, at whose desire I address you. The name by which it is known is expressive of the labours in which its members engage, and of the use to which

* Job iv. 8. 9.

† See Job iv. 20, 21.

which the charity they receive is applied. It is called, *THE SOCIETY FOR RELIEF OF THE DESTITUTE SICK.* They are destitute indeed, who, in sore affliction, want all things, and while they are *ready to perish have none to help them.*

Some are poor, but their relations are blessed at once with plenty, and with such benevolent hearts as delight to devise and to do liberal things. Others are sick, but their friends enjoy health, and kindly attend them. To some of the poor and needy, generous neighbours and compassionate strangers supply the place of such relations. Others, less happy in their private connections, and equally unable to live without the aids of benevolence, are generously received, hospitably entertained, kindly attended, by one or other of those numerous and munificent public charities, which reflect peculiar honour on the present age, and prove incontestibly that the love of God and man are diffused to a much greater extent than some ill-informed censorious people are disposed to think, or willing to acknowledge. To such relations and friends in private, to such benevolent public institutions, multitudes of poor, *who are ready to perish*, cry, and cry not in vain. Food, cloaths, a place of habitation, medicine, attendance, instruction, are helps meet for them; they ask and receive, and are comforted in their affliction.---Yet, even in these lands, and in this city, where private and public charity abounds, there is room, there is much need for more: numbers, crying under the pains of poverty and sore trouble, have none

to help them. Perhaps they have relations, but they too are poor and afflicted ones, or if prosperous, they are hard-hearted, and *hide themselves from their own flesh*. Private generosity has not espoused their cause; their situation gives them no claim upon any of the public charities. Liberal as are the regular institutions for the relief of the poor, and the consolation of the afflicted, their exertions must be limited by the rules of their founders, or by the extent of their funds. To propose receiving more than could be relieved, were neither wise nor charitable. It is a fact well known, a mournful truth which demands your serious attention, that, when every public charity has construed, in the most liberal manner, its rules of admission, and gone to the full extent of its ability; that, after kind relations, compassionate neighbours, and generous strangers, have done all they can for the relief of the needy, for the comfort of the mourners, still many remain crying and *ready to perish*, and without any to help them.---Children of men, who among you perceives not that some farther exertion is necessary? I trust, you are not *willing that any should perish*; yet you must be convinced, that the precarious boons of private benevolence, and the regular bounty of permanent endowments, are far from being equal to all the claims of perilous indigence. Something is wanting to complete the schemes of charity. For the outcasts, for the helpless of all descriptions, an asylum must be opened, a general asylum, from which none who come, in extreme need, shall ever be excluded. It is already
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opened, and many such have entered in. To you, to all the children of prosperity and benevolence, it belongs to support a charity so necessary, open and kind. Here is a poor but industrious man, the fruit of whose hard labour forms the scanty and only support of a large family; he is arrested suddenly by distress; there is nothing to answer the ordinary, much less the increased expences of his house. His situation, let us suppose, gives him a claim on some of the public charities; but, before application can be made in form, and answered according to the standing rules of the institution, the family is starving, and the disease of the sick increased by the want of what is proper in such a situation. Though relief to the full should at last be obtained, this family is in the mean time destitute. How necessary and useful in such a case, that immediate help which those who are to dispense the bounty we now ask are accustomed to afford! The distress perhaps, though severe, is short, and only temporary assistance is required; but excellent surely must be that charity, which, like *the Father of mercies*, is a *very present help in the time of need*.---Listen to another tale of woe. It is that of a family who have lived independent, perhaps in affluence, and been respected in society. While they enjoyed plenty, and were in health, their friends were many. Now prosperity is fled *as an eagle towards heaven*, want and pain have brought desolation into the place of gay resort, and sadness into the house of songs. Where are the *kinsfolk*, and such as were kind before? They know the mourn-

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ers afar off. Even to the friend, who was wont, with professed regard and apparent pleasure, to lean on their bosom, their breath is now become strange. If their names are enrolled in the list of those who have a claim on some institution for the relief of distress, yet, for a numerous family, accustomed to a delicate mode of living, and suddenly plunged into the deepest affliction, the small sum allowed is quite insufficient, and though they have received it, still they remain *ready to perish*. To these children of sorrow also, that general and discretionary charity which you are called to support, is accessible; it is ready to embrace them.---Among those who receive help in the time of need, must not be forgotten the forlorn stranger. He is travelling from one city, from one place of the country to another. His errand is to embrace a favourite child, who is bound for a distant land, or just returned from a far country. But pain and poverty have arrested him on his way, and there are none who know him in the city. Surely he is helpless; to him also the charity of which I speak is open, and you know who will say, *I was a stranger, and ye took me in*.

Thus an asylum is opened, from which it is intended that none who *are ready to perish* shall ever be excluded. The number of such is great, and constantly increasing. If the public bounty be not large in proportion, if the benevolent ever *become weary of well-doing*, it will be impossible to assist all who, under *manifold tribulations*, cry, and *have none to help them*. To unite economy

with liberality, and to prevent feigned affliction from consuming what is designed for the relief of real and extreme distress; to discover what degree of aid is necessary, and how long it ought to be continued; it is the uniform practice of those who relieve the distressed, to examine carefully at first, and from time to time, the situations of all who ask and receive assistance. Of Job, it is recorded in the text, that *the cause which he knew not he searched out*. In dispensing charity, it is wise and necessary to imitate this prudent conduct of the patriarch.

I trust you are now fully satisfied, that the need of those who claim your aid is very great. When men *are ready to perish*, surely the case is pressing; when such have none to help them, it must be extreme. The only object proposed and pursued in that scheme of charity which we invite you to support, is to relieve your fellow-creatures, who are ready to die of poverty and sore affliction; and at the same time, to direct such of these, as ignorance and vice may have placed upon the verge of exquisite and endless misery, to the only way of pleasantness, to the only path of life.---He who does not wish well to this scheme, has not the feelings of a man; and he who will not contribute for its support, has not the heart of a Christian.

Having shewed, that the persons for whom we ask charity are extremely needy,---I proceed,

II. To shew, that you are under strong obligations to exert yourselves for their relief. As humanity incites

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to such exertions, so justice requires, and sound judgment approves them.---*I put on righteousness, and it clothed me : my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.*---Thus Job records his works of charity and labours of love, as done in obedience to the law of righteousness, and under the direction of a mind well informed.

When men exert themselves for the deliverance of their helpless brethren, from a sense of duty to the Lord of the universe ; when they give to *the poor that cry* only what they can afford, without defrauding others ; when they *do good and communicate* in just proportion to their own ability and the need of the afflicted ;---then, as clothes cover the body, so *righteousness* pervades all their works of charity ; and then, too, as a robe of state and a royal diadem throw splendour around a prince directing the affairs of his kingdom, so *judgment and* or sound discretion adorns and crowns their labours of love. Thus righteousness itself requires exertion for the relief of the helpless. But on whom is this enjoined as a duty, and to what extent are men bound to bestow charity ? To give, is the duty of all who are more prosperous or less afflicted than those needy persons who apply for aid ; and such are bound rather to submit to hardship themselves, than leave any human being *ready to perish*. To suspend our charitable exertions as soon as perseverance in them would oblige us to give up our luxuries, or submit to some inconvenience and trouble, is not to *bear one another's burdens*, is not to *fulfil the law of Christ*. As he who has much, is bound to give largely

largely out of his abundance, so it is the duty of him who has little to share his pittance with such as have nothing, and none to help them :---Yes ; for these are the words of God, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise**. Such in general is the duty of charity, and such the rule of distribution. Now, to discharge this duty, and observe this rule, in relieving the extremely indigent, we are bound by the strongest obligations.

In the *first* place, Instinctive sympathy pleads the cause of the helpless. Why do our bowels yearn within us, and why does the tear start in our eye at the tale of woe ? Why does our hand, by a spontaneous movement, stretch itself forth at the sight of man's calamity ? The language of nature is, in this case, the voice of God. Sympathetic feeling is born with man. That those who are *ready to perish*, though unable to speak for themselves, may never want a powerful advocate in the hearts of mankind, the Father of all spirits, and Former of all bodies, has so framed the human constitution, that nature itself prompts us *to weep with those who weep*, and, with beneficent compassion, *to remember those who are in bonds as bound with them ; and those who suffer adversity, as being ourselves also in the body*†. Unless, therefore, we are resolved to stifle the strongest instincts, the kindest feelings of humanity ; if we are not prepared to condemn the voice of nature, and in it the authority of God,

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* Luke, iii. 11.

† Heb. xiii. 3.

we must feel ourselves bound to *draw out our souls to the hungry*, and feed them when they cry.

In the *second* place, The relations in which man stands to man, powerfully inculcate the duty of charity. Unnatural, cruel, and unjust, is he who cares not for the comfort of the family to which he belongs; and what is the whole race of men, but one large family? Have not those in affluence, and those in poverty, *one Father?* *Hath not one God created him who is at ease and him who is in pain?* Fashioned by the same Divine hand, are not all human bodies made of the same substance, nearly in the same form, subject to the same diseases, decay, and death? Is not the same almighty and holy One the *Father of the spirits of all flesh*; and, as they come from his forming hand, are not all of them equally adorned with his image? Yes, surely; and as *God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth*, so he has told us, and we feel it is true, that he *forms their hearts alike*, equally desirous of ease and happiness, equally averse to pain and misery. Brought into existence by one Creator, the prosperous and those who suffer adversity look up to the common Preserver of men, and are alike dependent on Him, who *opens his hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing*. God, to whom this earth and its fulness belong, has given them to the sons of men. If the sons of men are the offspring of God; if the Father of human kind covers the table for his whole family, and sets upon it *all things richly to be enjoyed*, how unnatural is it, that one child

child should have abundance, while another has nothing to eat ! How cruel and unjust, that a man should hoard up in useless store, while the brother or sister who sits by his side, is ready to die for want of what is requisite to preserve life !

If this be inconsistent with those common ties which bind man to man, must it not be utterly abhorrent to the nature of Christian brotherhood ? All the redeemed are, according to the will of God, begotten by *the word of truth*. Sprung of *incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever*, they are all born to entertain the same hope, and to enjoy the same inheritance. Without distinction of rank, they have access to the same *Father of mercies*, through the merits of the same Redeemer, and by the aids of the same Spirit. The God of all Christians is love, and the religion of Christ is a system of love. *He who loveth not knoweth not God*, and those who love God love also their brethren. Saints have one Father, even this God of love. *If any man, therefore, having this world's goods, and seeing his brother in need, shutteth up his bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? If he love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen ?* If charity to a brother in want, if deeds of kindness to an afflicted enemy, do not follow in the train of professed love to God, the profession is a solemn lie, and he who makes it a hypocrite.

In fine, as men and as Christians, one, even God, is our Father. Those therefore who fare sumptuously every day,

day, and those who are ready to die of hunger ; such as have many friends, and such as have none to help them, are all brethren.

If, then, any one member in the great family of mankind is diseased or wounded, poor or ready to die, are not the other members bound to suffer with him, and to do all they can for his relief ? Are not men of all ranks and conditions performing a short pilgrimage together ? Shall not the rich and the poor, the joyful and those who mourn, soon meet on equal terms in the habitation of worms and corruption ? Should not such brethren, such travelling companions, help and comfort one another on the journey of life ?

In the *third* place, If we call to mind the origin and design of that inequality which marks the conditions of men, it will appear in a strong light, that the prosperous are bound to succour the afflicted. God is supreme ; his will is the law of the universe. According to the *good pleasure of his will*, he assigns to the sons of men their various portions of enjoyment and of suffering. *A man's heart deviseth his way ; but the Lord directeth his steps : the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord**. He in whose hand are the times and the seasons, *has set the day of adversity over against the day of prosperity, and who can make that straight which he hath made crooked † ?* Thus God appoints for men the different situations in which they are placed.

* Prov. xvi. 9. 33.

† See Eccl. vii. 13, 14, &c.

placed. Let no man reproach the ways of his Maker, or *charge God foolishly*. The arrangements of Providence are not the result of caprice or severity. Every work of the Supreme Ruler is, like himself, wise and just and good. How small a portion of his great plan of government is known by the children of men! Yet we have good reason to rest assured, that, in the mean time, he is *good unto all*, and that *his tender mercies are over all his works* *; that though *clouds and darkness be round about him*, yet *righteousness and judgment are ever the habitation of his throne* †; and that he will, in the end, *discover deep things out of darkness, and bring to light the shadow of death* ‡.

It is not for want of benignity in God, that there are such things as poverty and pain on earth. Our wise and kind Father gives *the bread of adversity and the water of affliction*, that, out of these passing evils, which are for a season grievous to the flesh, he may bring spiritual improvement and lasting felicity both to those who suffer and to those who relieve distress. How easy were it for God to level all distinctions among men, and to banish from the world the cry of poverty and affliction! Or, though it be requisite for the moral improvement of man, that various troubles should abound in the world, still, without calling on one man to relieve another, could not the God of heaven and earth, by a vast variety of other means, or by the immediate exertion of his power, feed the hungry and clothe the naked

* Psal. cxlviii. 9.

† Psal. xcvi. 3.

‡ Job xii. 22.

naked, be the shield of the widow, the orphan's stay, and the help of all the helpless? Yes; the manna which fed the tribes of Israel came directly from heaven; by the power of God their clothes were kept in repair; even ravens were sent with food to the prophet of the Lord. But whatever the Almighty has done, or is able to perform, it seems good in his sight, that some shall possess plenty, and others cry for bread; that one portion of mankind shall dwell at ease, and another struggle with a great fight of afflictions. God, who assigns to men prosperity or distress, declares, *that the poor shall never cease out of the land*; and, from the consideration, that he will ever surround us with the indigent, the duty of charity is immediately inferred, and strictly enjoined; *therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in the land**.

The rich and the poor, the sick and those who are in health, alike depend on the Lord of heaven and earth. But, to promote the wisest and the best of ends, this supreme Ruler and common Benefactor appoints the one part of mankind to dispense his bounty to the other. How excellent the design of this appointment! Men were formed to live, to act, and to be happy, in social union. Without the command of temper, and the harmony of affection, it is impossible for them to honour God, or to be happy in society, or meet for heaven. In order, therefore, that men may taste again the lost felicity,

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licity,

* Deut. xv. 11.

licity, and again shine in the first glory of their race, it is necessary, that their proud and selfish tempers should give place to condescending and generous dispositions. The proud and selfish resemble, in misery as well as in wickedness, the worst being in the universe. Now, what so well calculated as poverty, affliction, and dependence on charity, to bring down that pernicious pride, which lifts up the heart against God and man, and its own comfort? On the other hand, does not the sight of men in sad adversity warn those who prosper, against idleness and intemperance? Do not frequent exertions for the relief of distress tend to beget and to confirm habits of benevolence and generosity, and thus to transform men into the image of divine goodness and felicity? Are not the kind offices performed by those who are *good stewards of the manifold goodness of God*, and received by those who are at once pensioners on the bounty of heaven, and on the benevolence of men, well calculated to restore, extend, or strengthen, the sweet harmony of reciprocal love among the sons of men? Surely, works of charity have a powerful and happy tendency to draw towards each other, *with the cords of love*, the prosperous and those who suffer affliction, and to bind together, *with the bands of men*, in social and blissful union, people of all situations in life.

As charity endears to each other him who gives and him who receives, it tends also to unite the hearts of both to the God of love. While the one considers *the house of mourning*, compares it with his own, perceives

so great a difference in his favour, and remembers, that the sovereign good pleasure of God has made the arrangement ; while the other sees, that even in *the house of feasting* he is not forgotten, and finds, that what is withheld from him is bestowed on one to whom God has given the heart of *a brother born* to help the children of *adversity* ; while God confers on the first the high honour of being a steward to dispense his bounty, and leaves not the last to perish, but sends one to help him in the time of need : Are not such considerations as these powerful incitements to gratitude, and strong motives, in both cases, *to lift up the heart with the hands*, and to bless and praise the good Lord of heaven and earth ?

Thus, *the rich and poor meet together* to mutual advantage, and to the honour of God *the maker of them all**. God has appointed that inequality which marks the conditions of men : this he has done, not in caprice or severity, but to promote the wisest and best of purposes. To gain the ends proposed, it is necessary that those who prosper succour those who are in adversity. If, therefore, we are not prepared to condemn the arrangements of divine wisdom and goodness, and to oppose the designs of Providence ; if we would be *workers together with God* for the moral improvement and true felicity of man ; if we desire to vindicate the ways, and to honour the name of the universal and everlasting King, we must give *charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned*.

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* Prov. xxii. 2.

In the *fourth* place, God, in all parts of his word, commands exertion for the relief of the needy. What is there in Moses, the Prophets, or the Psalms, in the writings of Apostles, or in the discourses of the Saviour, more frequently enjoined, or more forcibly inculcated, than charity to the poor and afflicted? In the body of that law which was delivered with thunder from the top of Sinai, is recorded this pointed command of God: *If there be among you a poor man, within any of thy gates, or in thy land, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother, but shalt surely give him, yea, and open thy hand wide unto him; I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in the land* *. The great master of sacred song represents it as a prominent feature in the character of a good man, that he *considers the case of the poor* †; that he *dispenses and gives to the needy* ‡. *Cast thy bread upon the waters*, said Solomon; *give a portion to seven, and also to eight; in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand* §. God, pouring contempt on the forms of religion where charity is wanting, and declaring, by the Prophet, what is well-pleasing in his sight, utters these striking words: *the fast that I have chosen, is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh* §? Time would fail

* See Deut. xv. 7,—11.

† Psal. xli. 1.

‡ Psal. cxii. 9.

§ See Eccl. xi. 1,—6.

§ Isa. lviii. 7.

fail us to repeat what Apostles have written, and what the *Teacher sent from God* has left on record, to enforce charity. The sum of apostolic injunctions on this subject is contained in these words: *Put on bowels of mercy and kindness; above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness; to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased* *. This is the command of the great God our Saviour, *Give to him who asketh thee, and from him who would borrow of thee turn thou not away* †. Surely no duty is more frequently or more strictly commanded in the word of God, than charitable efforts to relieve our helpless brethren. When God commands, it must be daring wickedness to refuse charity.

In the *last* place, The example of God powerfully enforces the duty of charity. While God commands men to be merciful, his own mercy to men is great, both in providence and in redemption.

We are commanded to be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful; to be followers of God as dear children. The mercy of God is over all his works. He sends his showers to water, and his sun to warm the fields of the evil as well as of the good; he is kind, not merely to the pure and grateful, but also to the unthankful and unholy: he retains not the gifts of goodness till the disobedient turn to the wisdom of the just, but exercises forbearance, long-suffering and goodness, as means of leading to repentance. He expects not, nor desires,
neither

* See Col. iii. 12, 14. and Heb. xiii. 16. † Mat. v. 42.

neither is it possible for him to receive for his favours, any return beneficial to himself; yet he delights in doing good to the undeserving, and dispensing mercy to the guilty, in sending them *rain and fruitful seasons*, with other gifts of kind providential care, to *fill their hearts with food and gladness*. God feeds even *the ravens* when they cry, and shall man be deaf to the cry of man? Observe the ways of Providence, and be wise. Copy the kind and generous example of Him whose offspring ye are; and, in the measure competent to your nature, *be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect*. Give for the relief of distress, hoping for no benefit in return from him who receives. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, and the goodness of his providence binds us to be merciful.

When we add to this *the kindness of God to men in Christ Jesus*, how shall language express, or how shall the mind of man conceive, the full force of the argument? It is our duty to *walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us*; but *the breadth and length, the depth and height of this love pass knowledge**. Yet thus much we know concerning the love of the Redeemer, that it is all favour to the undeserving, mercy to the criminal, generous goodness rejoicing to deliver those who are *ready to perish*, and to make the wretched happy. The farther it surpasses comprehension, the stronger is the argument which we deduce from it to inculcate charity to the children of want and sad adversity. *Ye know the*
grace

* See Eph. iii. 18, 19, and cbap. v. 2.

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich *. Great is the mystery of redeeming mercy; the Son of God was manifested to live and die on earth, that his enemies might be changed into friends, and *might not perish, but have everlasting life!* While he dwelt with men, he was a father to the poor, eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; he unstopped the ears of the deaf, and caused the tongue of the dumb to sing. Far removed, now, from the view of the world, but unchanged and unchangeable in his friendship, he speaks from the throne of grace, *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men; ye have destroyed yourselves, but in me is your help.* Still, when the poor and needy seek bread and water, and find none, *his eyes are over them for good, and his ears open to their prayers.* The bread of time perisheth, and the waters of the earth pass away; but he feeds them with bread which endures for ever, and brings them to that living fountain which springs up into everlasting life. From on high, he sends down salve to open the eyes of the blind, white raiment to cover the naked, and fine gold to enrich the poor. His abundance cannot be diminished, to dispense he delights, and none of the needy who come for aid are ever sent empty away. Whoever is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked *, in need of all things; in fine, whoever thirsts for happiness, is more than welcome to all he needs or can enjoy. The bread and the water

of

* See 2 Cor. viii. 9.

† See Rev. iii. 17, 18.

of life, divine medicine, royal apparel, enduring wealth, full and everlasting joy, are not only freely offered, but all the children of men are intreated to receive them. *Ho, every one who thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*.* So very great is the kindness of God in the redemption of men by Christ Jesus !---Now the application of this wonderful example of generous love, as an argument to enforce charity, is obvious. The Redeemer is the pattern of our Christian profession ; *he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.* , If, while sojourning among men, *he went about doing good,* we, his professed followers, ought to *walk as he also walked.* If it be still his employment and pleasure to deliver the *poor who cry and are ready to perish, and have none to help them,* then it is incumbent on us never to become *wary of well doing,* but to persevere in doing good to the *poor and to the needy in the land.* Power, such as the Redeemer has, to forgive sins, to confer bliss, or to work miracles for the relief of men, we have not ; but power, such as we possess, we are bound to exert, and things, such as we have, it is our duty to contribute. How strongly are we bound, by Divine example, to do good and to communicate, even to *those who hate us, to pray for such as despitefully use us and persecute us, never to be overcome of evil, but to endeavour always to overcome evil with good!* We must not forget by whom,

and

* Isa. lv. i.

and on what occasion it was said, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* It ought ever to be remembered, that *charity is the bond of perfectness*, and the end of the commandment; that we are bound by the rich mercy and great love of God, discovered in providence and redemption, to do all in our power for the relief of the helpless.

Thus, whether we consider the suggestions of instinctive sympathy, or reflect on the relations in which man stands to man, or consider the origin and design of that inequality which marks the present condition of our race, or listen to the command of God, often repeated in his word, or call to mind the doings of the Lord in providence and in redemption, we find ourselves bound, by the strongest obligations, to do every thing we can for the relief of our poor, joyless, and afflicted brethren. Happy they who, conscious of sincere obedience to the law of charity, can adopt the language of Job, and say, *We have put on righteousness, and are clothed with it, our judgment is as a robe and a diadem.*

Having shewed, that you are under strong obligations to exert yourselves for the relief of the extremely needy, I go on,

III. To shew, that, in doing this, you will not only discharge your duty, but most essentially promote your own interest.

The duty and interest of men are inseparably conjoined; rightly understood, they can never come into

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flesh *. What avaritious worldling, or fordid miser, is not cruel to himself, as well as unmerciful to the poor? Are not the care, fear, and anxiety of such men, in gaining and securing gold, painful to the mind and wasting to the body? Besides, though avarice prevail against the exercise of mercy, yet, when human calamity forces itself upon the view of the worldling, the stirrings of suppressed sympathy will not suffer his soul to be at ease. On the other hand, compassionate dispositions, and the charity which proceeds from them, not only exempt the liberal man from the pain which gnaws the heart of the churl, but produce a sweet satisfaction within, to which the whole generation of the tenth must, if they change not, remain everlasting strangers. Consult experience, and let the conscience, memory and heart of every one bear witness to the truth. I trust there is not one

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In the *first* place, Benevolent affections, and the kind deeds which proceed from them, bring an immediate and sweet reward into the bosom. *The merciful man doeth good to his own soul, but the cruel troubleth his own flesh.*

flesh *. What avaritious worldling, or fordid miser, is not cruel to himself, as well as unmerciful to the poor? Are not the care, fear, and anxiety of such men, in gaining and securing gold, painful to the mind and wasting to the body? Besides, though avarice prevail against the exercise of mercy, yet, when human calamity forces itself upon the view of the worldling, the stirrings of suppressed sympathy will not suffer his soul to be at ease. On the other hand, compassionate dispositions, and the charity which proceeds from them, not only exempt the liberal man from the pain which gnaws the heart of the churl, but produce a sweet satisfaction within, to which the whole generation of the selfish must, if they change not, remain everlasting strangers. Consult experience, and let the conscience, memory and heart of every one bear witness to the truth. I trust there is not one among you so hardened, as never to have felt one sympathetic emotion, nor done one generous deed. From what you have done and felt before, judge what you ought to do, and what you may expect to feel again. If selfish and hardened dispositions and conduct have never yet rejoiced the heart, is it likely that they ever will? Is it wise for yourselves to indulge them any longer? Have you felt at any time a glow of pleasure in the exercise of a kind affection, or in the performance of a work of charity? If, in shewing mercy to others, you have done good to your own souls, is it not your interest to do so again? Ye merciful men, consult your experience,

* Prov. xii 17.

experience, and be encouraged to persevere in labours of love by the comfort which never fails to attend them. Say, is there any pleasure more exquisite than that which springs from relieving the helpless? When you have seen a brother or sister struggling with want and groaning under affliction, have not the tender movements of compassion, and your endeavours to relieve the distressed, relieved your own souls, raised nature above itself, and imparted to the heart generous and sweet enjoyment? Has not the kindness done to others returned into your own bosoms, filled your hearts with comfort and joy, and made you feel, that the Saviour spoke truth when he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive?* Though a sense of duty be the principle from which we ought to act, yet surely it is a strong encouragement to the practice of charity, that while the churl, in shutting up his bowels of compassion, does violence to himself, the merciful man, in dispensing and giving to the poor, does good to his own soul.

In the *second* place, To deliver the poor and needy when they cry, recommends one to the esteem of mankind. Man desires to be esteemed, honoured and loved in society. When, by his conduct, he deserves the reputation he wishes, the desire is innocent, it is virtuous. When a good name is procured, and supported by a good character, it is better than precious ointment. In this case, it not only adds to the comfort, but to the usefulness of him who enjoys it. The world may bow before the rich, and follow him who is in great power ;
but

but if riches are kept entirely for the owners, and power employed to promote only selfish ends, the people, while they cringe, curse the opulent and condemn the mighty. But the good, the charitable, the generous man, is the darling, not of the needy only, but of mankind. *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good, for a charitable man, some would even dare to die,* would encounter the king of terrors from affection to the generous friend of man. Others may be praised, because they are dreaded, or because their real character is veiled; but the friend of the poor and needy, the better he is known, is praised the more, and enjoys a good name because he is esteemed and loved. Job was a father to the poor, and delivered them when they cried: because of this, the princes, and all the people, delighted to honour him. How picturesque and beautiful his own description of the homage done him on account of his liberality and kindness! *When I went out into the gate, through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and hid themselves; the aged arose, and stood up: the princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth: the nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me---Why thus esteemed, revered, and loved? the reason follows; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.*

If,

If, therefore, you wish to deserve and to enjoy the esteem and love of mankind, the sure and honourable way to have this desire accomplished, is plain before you. Be merciful, be generous; and when the ear hears, when the eye beholds how you comfort the mourners, the tongue will pronounce you blessed, the heart will rejoice in your prosperity and honour, and, when the fame of mighty conquerors shall have perished, your memory shall be blessed in the earth.

In the *third* place, The surest way to prosper in the world, is to be liberal to the needy. Why do the hearts of many remain hard, and their hands closed, while brethren are starving by their side? It is, they will inform us, because they have scarcely sufficient for themselves, are afraid of being reduced to want in old age, or because they have portions to provide for their children. Men who attempt, by such reasoning, to justify themselves in withholding from the poor, either do not read the word of God, or do not believe that it must be accomplished; either they observe not the course of events, or do not consider that in these, *God worketh all things according to the council of his will*. If they believed the Scriptures, or the superintendence of Providence, they would do good to-day, without indulging anxious thoughts about to-morrow; and would rest satisfied, that the surest way to prosper in the world is to imitate the Lord of all in liberality. He who denies to the distressed that charity to which God has given them an unquestionable right, forfeits *the blessing of the Lord*, which
maketh

maketh rich, and inherits that curse, by which *goods flow away, in the day of wrath*.—Reflect, brethren, on the past, consider the present : whom have you ever known reduced to beggary by kindness to the poor ? but how many, by their keen desire and great haste to be rich ? They have *withheld more than was meet*, and it has ended in *poverty*. Consider the circle of your acquaintance : who among them have prospered most in the world ? the selfish or the liberal ? Have not the latter increased in wealth, while they scattered abroad among the needy ? While the fortunes of many uncharitable men have perished, have not the sons of benevolence, with few exceptions, continued to prosper ? *The liberal, saith God, deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall be stand**. The fortunes of the liberal, like those of other men, are exposed to the fire, the water, the storm, the enemy, a thousand accidents which elude the foresight or defy the resistance of man ; but God has taken them under his peculiar protection. *Faithful is he who hath promised, and able also to perform*. In his hand are the winds of heaven, the waves of the sea, and the hearts of men ; the springs of nature and the reins of Providence. Surely he who, in giving to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, lays out on good security. Do you believe that the word of God endures for ever, and that the Almighty rules over all to accomplish his own declarations ? Do you wish to enjoy plenty, and leave a portion to your offspring ? Then, to be consistent

* Isa. xxxii. 8.

ent with yourselves, obey the command, confide in the promise of God. Your duty, and the advantage you may expect to reap in performing it, are thus beautifully expressed; *Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine* *.

In the *fourth* place, To be liberal while it is in your power, will prepare consolation for the day of calamity. *Man is born to trouble*; his rest is not on earth. Every thing in the world is subject to change. He who begins early to be the friend of the poor, the patron of the mourners, lays the best foundation for prosperity which can be laid on earth. The prospect opens before him like the light of a summer morning, while the dew is yet upon the tender grass, the air serene, and the sky without clouds. The probability, that his day will be bright, and his sun go down in peace, is great; but the thing is not certain. What has been may be again. Even the most benevolent have been set down to the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. For their own improvement, and for the instruction of others, it is often requisite, that the good, as well as the bad, should endure suffering. The case of Job is well known, and his instructive history will natively suggest itself to your minds. Perfect in his generation, pious and benevolent, rich and charitable beyond most men of his own or other times; in the morning of his life, all things

* Prov. iii. 9, 10.

things seemed to announce an unclouded day, and a night which would at last descend softly and sweetly upon the sky. He informs us, that while in his prosperous days he was performing the part of a father to the poor, he entertained the hope of living long to see and to do good, and of prospering to the end. *My root, he says, was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch: my glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand: then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.* Such was the expectation of this excellent man. The hope of prospering in the world was never supported by stronger probability; yet even Job lived to say, *O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness. O that I were as in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil!* Thus, however fair and promising the morning, yet sometimes the heavens gather blackness, the winds blow, the rains descend, and the floods of adversity come at noon. Woe to the hard-hearted, uncharitable man, when the storm arises; his comfort, supported only by the loose sand, is swept away. He befriends none while he prospers, and therefore has no friend who will love always, no brother born for adversity. Wealth may surround him with cringing slaves to do homage, not to

himself, but to his gold; when reduced to poverty, the tie by which these seeming friends are attached to him is dissolved. Disliked by the poor, to whom he refused aid in their affliction, hated by many who have felt his severity, and deserted by his flatterers, there is no spring of comfort in his heart. *He made gold his confidence*, and it is gone; *he hid his eyes*, that he might not see the face of the needy, and so inherits *many a curse*: his unmerciful soul cannot look up with confidence to the Father of mercies. It is a recorded truth, that *who so stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard* *. Woe to the unfeeling and selfish man when calamity overtakes him! But let the blasts of adversity come, yet *blest is he who considereth the poor*; for *the liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself* †. His good character and charitable conduct have procured him friends, such friends as love at all times, such brothers as are *born for adversity* ‡. He deserves, and he enjoys the esteem and love of his fellow-citizens at large: with regret they see him descend into the vale of poverty and affliction, and resolve to befriend him who has been the comfort of many mourners. To such a child of affliction, memory and an approving heart bring comfort from the past, while conscience anticipates the future, and makes consolation to abound. Such was the case with Job. While the injuries of enemies, the mistakes of friends, the loss of his property, the death of his children,

* Prov. xxi. 13.

† Prov. xi. 25.

‡ Prov. xvii. 17.

dren, the universal desolation of his house, and his severe trouble, called him to mourning, he found consolation by recounting, as in the text, his works of charity and labours of love. That he had been kind to men from a sense of duty to God, gave him confidence in the divine presence, and presaged that return of prosperity which made the latter end of his life more blessed than its beginning. His charity, and the principle from which it proceeded, proved his interest in the salvation of God: and, in the close of the bitterest tale of woe contained in his book, caused him to break forth, in the language of triumphant hope and joy: *O that my words were written! Ob that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; that though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me**.

Such is the consolation which present liberality will yield, should distress come upon you. Give, therefore, a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth†: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall men give into your bosom; for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again‡. Blessed is he who considereth the poor, the

Lord

* Job xix. 23,---27,

† Eccl. xi. 2.

‡ Luke vi. 38.

Lord will deliver him in time of trouble ; the Lord will preserve, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth *. Seldom is the liberal forsaken, or his seed allowed to beg bread ; *he is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed* †. Be charitable, then, be generous ; comfort the mourners, while it shall please God to number you with the prosperous ; and if ever the cup of adversity shall be put into your hand, it will be accompanied with the friendship of men, the testimony of a good conscience, and the blessing of Heaven ; and surely these will infuse sweetness into the waters of Marah, and make the bitterness of grief to pass away : Yes ; for these are the words of God, *If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as noon-day : and the Lord shall be thy guide continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones ; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not* ‡.

In the *last* place, The merciful cannot miss a gracious and great reward. It may be requisite for the honour of their Maker, for the benefit of themselves and others, that instead of prospering, they should suffer affliction in the world. Their lot may be cast among men so utterly depraved and ungrateful, as neither to esteem nor love them ; among *fierce lions* in human form, who, instead of relieving them in distress, will *add affliction to their bonds*. The wicked one may accuse ; conscience may
be

* Psalm xli. 1, 2. † See Psalm xxxvii. 25, 26. ‡ Isa. lviii. 10, 11.

be alarmed : and the light of their Father's countenance may cease, for a season, to shine upon them. But who knows not, that, under the direction of infinite wisdom, love and power, these, and all other things, *work together*, not to deprive them of a gracious reward, or to diminish it, but to make them meet for enjoying *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them? God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love.* To a mind absorbed in time, and sense, and gold, charity bestowed on one from whom no return can be expected, seems to be lost for ever. But what says *the faithful and true Witness? When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen; why? lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But, when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just*.*

Remember, O children of men ! that there is an eternity before you ; that there must be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust ; a day in which God will judge you all in righteousness, and fix your everlasting state. When *the judgment shall be set, and the books opened*, and the whole race of men assembled before the tribunal of God, how shall it end with the selfish, and with the charitable? *The vile person shall be no more called*

* Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.

called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. His riches will not profit, when the wrath of the Lamb is come. On what evidence will men be pronounced accursed, and doomed to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? On the evidence that they have been hard-hearted, uncharitable men, they shall be doomed to everlasting punishment. But surely it shall go well with him who, in giving to the poor, from obedient love to the Father of all, was wont to lend unto the Lord; for now, with incalculable interest, God will repay him†. God, indeed, owes him nothing. What he gave in charity was not his own: he acted as steward to Him who is proprietor of all. The reward, therefore, though graciously proportioned to his works of charity and labours of love, is not merited by these; it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and is of grace, that it may be sure. To all, who on this principle are charitable, it will be said, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. The Judge speaks, and it is done: these go away into life eternal; blessed are the merciful, for they have obtained mercy. Surely it is true wisdom not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying*

* See Mat. xxv. 41, &c.

† See Prov. xix. 17.

laying up for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life *. *Cast thy bread upon the waters ; it may disappear, but will not be lost among the waves ; thou shalt find it after many days* †.

Thus, brethren, if you think of the need of those who claim your aid, it is extreme ; if you reflect upon the obligations which bind you to relieve them, they are the strongest possible ; and if you call to mind the gracious reward of the charitable, it is present, great, increasing, and everlasting. Whether, therefore, you consider the need of men, or the authority of God, or your own interest ; whether you confine your views to time, or look forward into eternity ; the argument for relief to the destitute bears in upon you from every quarter, and must come home with irresistible power upon every mind which discerns the force of reason ; upon every heart which is not dead to sympathetic feeling, to the sense of duty, to the allurements of true and lasting interest.

This work of charity, therefore, which, in the providence of God, your hand finds to do on the first day and first Sabbath of the year ‡, do with all your might ; for it cannot be done in the grave whither you are going, and where you, and those poor who now cry to you for relief, shall soon meet together, equally stripped of all earthly possessions. With many, it is the custom at this season

* See 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

† Eccl. xi. 1.

‡ This Sermon was preached, January 1. 1797.

season of the year, to abuse the world and to abuse themselves, by indulging the lusts of intemperance. God forbid that our poor brethren who cry should perish for want, and our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. How much better to be moderate in our expences, and reserve something for the poor! More than an hundred families, all involved in extreme poverty, accompanied, in every house, with some painful disease, are crying this night to this assembly, beseeching us, as we wish and hope to obtain mercy, to shew mercy to them, lest they perish with hunger, nakedness and disease. *The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it to them. They who fed delicately are become desolate: though brought up in scarlet, they now embrace dunghills; their visage is black as a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick*.* If we are not become more cruel than the sea-monsters, which draw out the breast, and give suck to their young ones, we will this evening, in a liberal contribution, draw out our souls to these hundreds of destitute fellow-creatures. It is the season of feasting, and shall they have nothing to preserve the shaking remains of life from falling into the grave? It is the season of sending presents from house to house; let us send liberal portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Time is short, the world and the fashion

of

* See Lament. iv.

of it pass away : its silver and gold perish : we its inhabitants are a wind that passeth away never to return. The present, therefore, is the time *to do good and to communicate*, and, by abounding in the riches of liberality for the relief of others, to lay up treasure in heaven for ourselves. Should we delay only for a night, the poor may perish, or we ourselves may die. Our time, at the longest, is short ; its duration for one moment is uncertain ; its flight is rapid, as the shadow of a cloud carried by the wind. When past, to recall it is impossible ; when finished, we can no longer cast our bread upon the waters, in the hope of a rich return in eternity. Opportunities of doing good, once neglected, are lost for ever. Now, therefore, let your hand be opened wide. If, in entering the house of God, you have laid down a portion for seven, leave another for eight in going out. Begin the year with liberality, crown it afterwards with loving kindness and tender mercy : end your days dealing bread to the hungry. This is the first time that I have pleaded, in this manner, the cause of the poor ; it may be your last opportunity to give for their relief. Let not the mite of those who possess little be withheld from such as possess nothing, and have none to help them. Let not those who possess much content themselves with giving merely a little more than a poor neighbour ; but let them draw out their souls to the hungry, and abound in liberality to the perishing. Remember the charity of Job recorded in the text, and, by imitating his goodness, ensure to yourselves *the blef-*

sing of him who is ready to perish. Remember also Him, who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich. Lay your hand on your heart, as in the presence of your omniscient Judge, and meditate on these divine declarations ; He shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy ; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy ; and if, with these solemn truths present to your minds, you can go from this house without leaving something for the destitute, I will venture to affirm, either that you have given largely at your entrance, or that you have little at command, or that you want the hearts of Christians, and even the feelings of men.

Happy, thrice happy, the man who can go into eternity, saying, in all good conscience, I have not made gold my hope, nor said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence. I have not withheld the poor from their desire, nor caused the eyes of the widow to fail. I have not eaten my morsel alone, but the fatherless have shared it with me. Never have I seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering ; they were always warmed with the fleece of my sheep, and their loins have blessed me.

A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
ORIGIN, DESIGN, AND RULES,
OF
*THE SOCIETY FOR RELIEF OF THE
DESTITUTE SICK.*

THIS Society, which at present consists of nearly 200 Members, was instituted in the year 1785.

Some persons in this place, having seen a pamphlet, containing an account of the origin and progress of a Society which had been instituted in London, some years before, for the relief and spiritual instruction of the Destitute Sick, pleased with the design, and encouraged by the countenance with which the Lord seemed to have favoured that institution, thought of establishing one similar to it here. Accordingly, having received the approbation of many of those to whom they communicated their intentions, accompanied with promises of assistance for carrying them into execution, they agreed, after several meetings held for prayer and deliberation

on

on the subject, to form themselves into a SOCIETY FOR RELIEF OF THE DESTITUTE SICK.

The design of this institution is, as its name imports, and as is fully stated in the foregoing discourse, to relieve, by pecuniary aid, those who are laid aside by sudden distress from following their usual occupations; who have no acknowledged claim on any charitable fund; and who have no friends able or willing to assist them: and, along with relief to their bodily wants, to administer to their spiritual necessities, by giving them such religious instruction and advice as may seem most adapted to their situation.

Soon after the formation of the Society, such Rules as appeared necessary for its management, and were thought best calculated for promoting the important designs of its institution, were agreed on, and are in substance as follows:

I. That it shall consist of charitably disposed persons, who are also friendly to religion.

II. That each Member shall pay sixpence at admission; and, during his continuance in the Society, not less than one shilling and one penny *per* quarter.

III. That the money arising from the establishment of this Society shall be applied in relieving persons and families in distress, who are not entitled to the benefit of any other charitable institution; except in cases where the supply received from other funds is not nearly adequate

quate to the support of those persons or families : In such cases, the Committee are allowed to grant an addition, so as to make their supply equal to what would have been given them, if they had received nothing else.

IV. That Members and Contributors shall have full power to recommend any person or family they wish to be visited and relieved by the Society.

V. That there shall be a General Meeting of the Society every quarter, for paying their contributions ; when a state of the Committee's transactions and intrusions shall be laid before them, for their inspection and approbation. A minute shall be made of each meeting, and signed by the Preses, chosen from among the members present.

VI. That the business of the Society shall be conducted by a committee of eight persons, three of whom to be a quorum ; two of them to be appointed as Treasurer and Clerk. The number of the Committee to be increased or diminished, as circumstances may require, (agreeably to which, it hath been since increased to twelve, the number of which it at present consists) : that at each succeeding quarter, three of the members of Committee shall go out, and other three shall be nominated as their successors, by the Committee, to the General Meeting, for their approbation.

VII.

VII. That the Treasurer and Clerk shall not be liable to be changed as the other members of Committee, but shall continue in office as long as they find it convenient, and give satisfaction to the Committee and General Meeting with regard to their intromissions.

VIII. That the Committee shall meet every Friday evening, and receive the petitions and representations that shall be given them, and shall appoint two of their number to visit the houses of the persons applied for, who shall enquire particularly into their circumstances, and give in their report to the Committee at next meeting; according to which they shall grant such supply as shall appear necessary.

IX. That those who administer the relief given by the Committee shall report, from week to week, the changes that take place in their health and circumstances: that during their visits, they shall take every opportunity of speaking to them of spiritual and eternal things; and shall pray with them, if desired.

X. That all the meetings of this Society shall be opened and concluded by prayer.

XI. That the visitors shall not be obliged to receive any application, except in very urgent cases, that has not been produced and read before the Committee.

XII. That it shall be optional in Subscribers being Members of Committee.

XIII. That the books of the Society shall always be open for the inspection of Subscribers and Contributors.

That those who have the management of the funds of this Society might satisfy the Public as to the proper distribution of the money entrusted to them, and might thereby encourage the continuance of that confidence and support which they had so liberally received; it has been their uniform practice, from the commencement of it, to have their books examined annually by two Clergymen in the city or neighbourhood; and to publish a statement of their transactions for the preceding year, attested by the Examinators.

As an evidence of the extensive usefulness of this Institution, and of the approbation it has received, it will be sufficient to mention, that, by the statement of last year, it appears that, from the time of its establishment in the year 1785 to November 1796, there has been distributed among 5123 families, consisting of 10,507 persons, (many of them in circumstances of the most aggravated distress), the sum of L. 2320 : 11 : 9. Of which, the following attestation was given by the Reverend Gentlemen, who at that time examined their books.

ATTESTATION.

EXTREME poverty, with the addition of sickness and pain, approaches near to the utmost degree of human misery.

While

While the streets of this city are infested with many fictitious objects of compassion, in its garrets and cellars, and those of the environs, are many real ones, reduced by poverty and disease to circumstances of which those who have not seen them can form no adequate ideas.

To ascertain and assist those, is the object of the Society for relief of the Destitute Sick.

The excellence of the design must be obvious to all. It is with much pleasure the Subscribers of this paper can assure the Public, from their personal knowledge, that the execution of it has been such as to entitle the Society to their fullest confidence and most entire approbation.

For more than eleven years, the members of this Society have not only subscribed regularly to its support, but, without fee or reward, have visited weekly the habitations of wretchedness, to distinguish the real from the feigned, and to leave their charity, and that of others entrusted to them.

Such being the facts, it is unnecessary to say more, than that, in this Society, the benevolent and humane may find an almoner, who will dispense their charity, not only with strict fidelity and prudence, but to objects, whom, of all other, they would wish to assist and relieve.

Edinburgh,
1796.

DAVID BLACK, *Minister.*

DAVID DICKSON, *Minister.*

